

# A GUIDE TO THE PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH

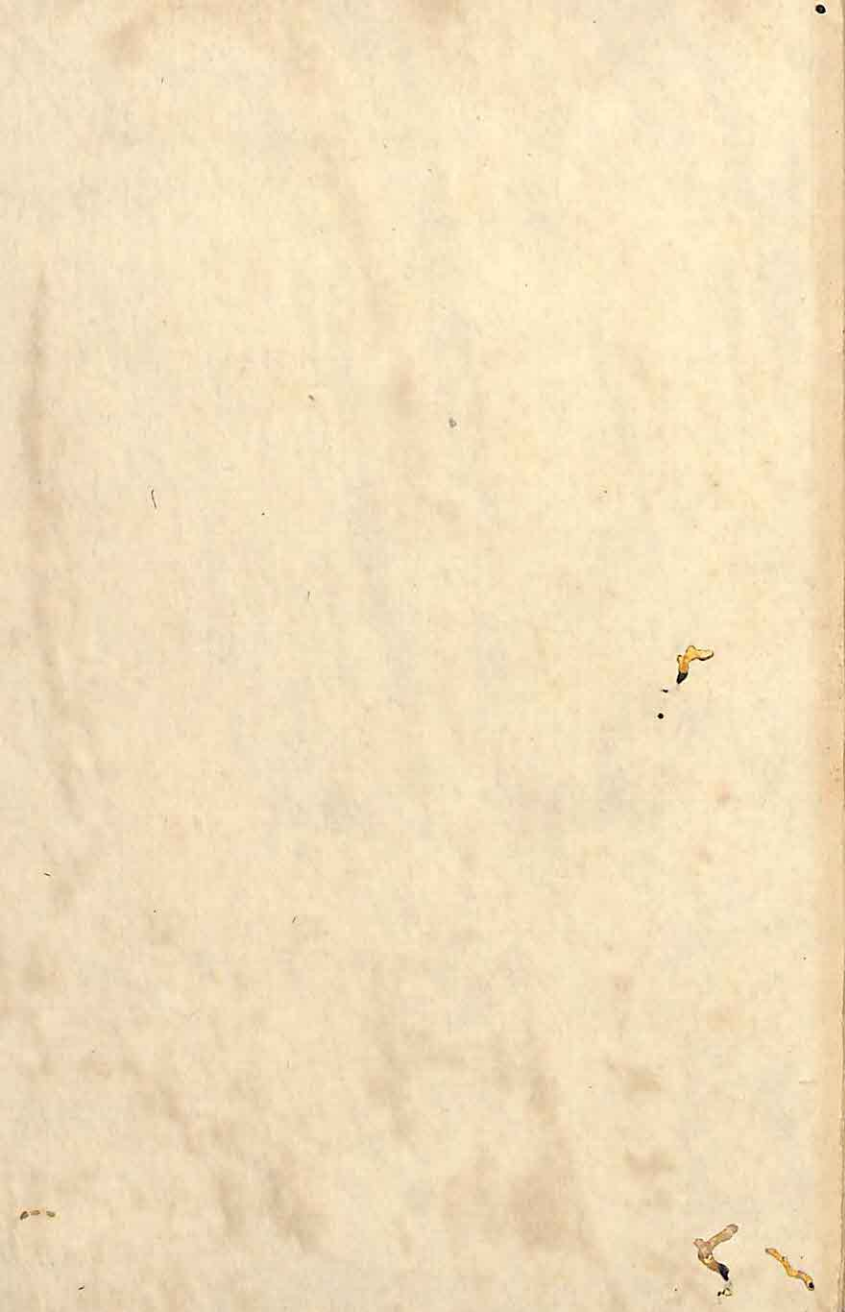
ADVICE TO  
TEACHERS OF  
ENGLISH



BY

R.A. KRIEKENBEEK

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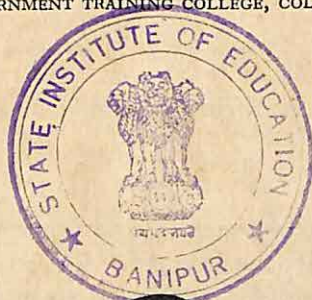


# A GUIDE TO THE PRONUNCIATION OF ENGLISH

BY

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## PREFACE

Two considerations led to the writing of this little book. The first was a belief, based on my experience in teaching the pronunciation of English at the Government Training College, Colombo, that the pronunciation difficulties of pupils speaking English as a second language had not been fully appreciated or subjected to a careful analysis. The sounds of the spoken language, its speech rhythms and intonations (as characteristic of the language as its vocabulary or grammar) have to be acquired. This objective cannot be achieved by undirected imitation of the teacher. The pupil needs specific guidance, given by a teacher who is alive to his difficulties and qualified to deal with them.

The teacher, too, has his own problems to solve. How is the limited amount of time allotted to English to be used to the greatest advantage? How is the pupil's interest in the new language to be aroused and maintained? How is he to be made to realize that to understand English when it is spoken, and to speak it really well himself, is as important as to be able to write it and to read it?

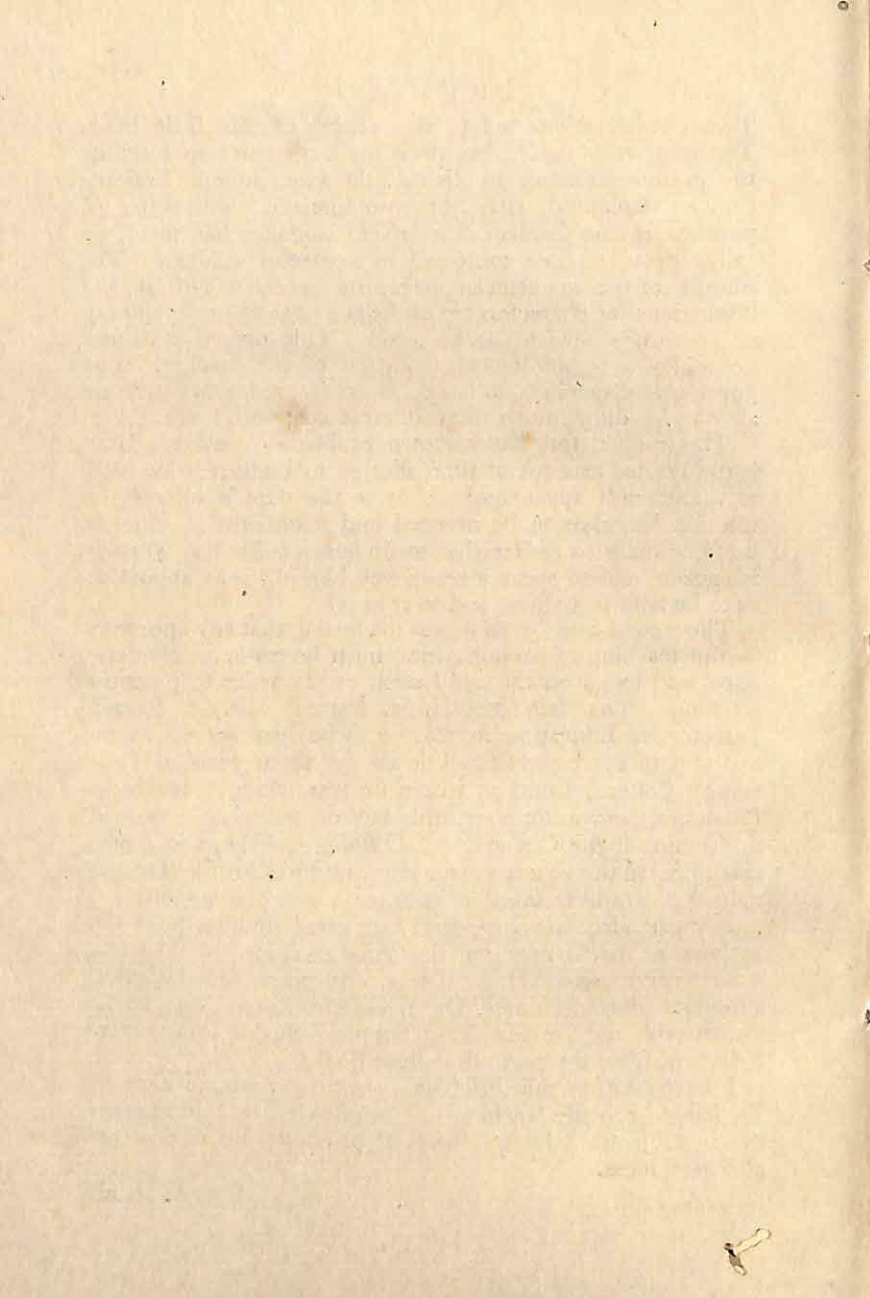
The second consideration was my feeling that any approach to the teaching of pronunciation must be made on phonetic lines, and based on the application of phonetics to practical teaching. The late Mr H. S. Perera, M.A., a former Director of Education in Ceylon, who had served as an assistant to Professor Daniel Jones for three years at University College, London, where he was taking a course in Phonetics, always impressed this fact on me when I worked under him at the Government Training College, and I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to him for the help and careful training he gave me during this period.

I must also acknowledge my great indebtedness to authors of text-books on the pronunciation of English, such as Professor Daniel Jones, Professor Lloyd James, Professor Harold Palmer, Dr A. H. McAllister, Miss L. E. Armstrong, and Dr Ida Ward, for the valuable information I derived from the perusal of their books.

I have written this brief guide to the pronunciation of English to provide teachers in Ceylon with an introduction to the subject. I hope it will not prove devoid of interest and usefulness.

*Colombo 1953*

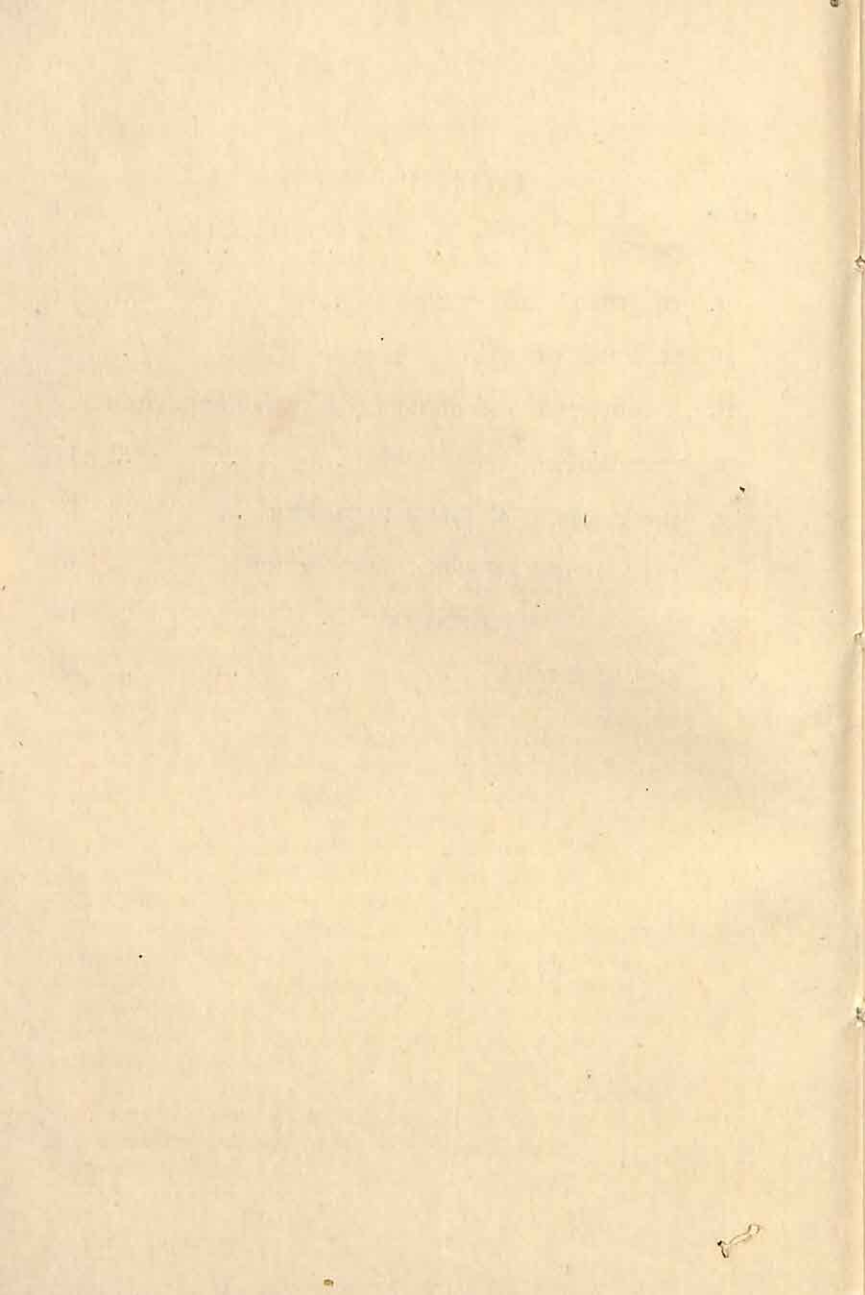
*R. A. K.*





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## CHAPTER I

### THE PUPIL'S DIFFICULTIES

THE Sinhalese or Tamil pupil attempting to speak English is faced at the outset with difficulties of several kinds in the matter of pronunciation.

His first difficulty lies in learning to make those English speech sounds which are not familiar to him because they are not found in Sinhalese and Tamil: e.g., the sound of 'o' in 'not', that of 'or' in 'nor', that of 'oi' in 'noise', the consonants f, v, z, the syllabic consonants in 'uncle', 'mutton', and so on.

The second difficulty is connected with the unphonetic nature of English spelling. Pupils accustomed to speak phonetic languages like Sinhalese and Tamil, where the spelling gives a good indication of the pronunciation, contract what may be termed 'a spelling pronunciation', that is, a habit of pronouncing English words as one might suppose they ought to be pronounced, namely, according to their spelling. To guard against this the pupil has to be told that the letter 'a' in 'absurd' must not be said as if it were the 'a' in 'bat', but that it has to be pronounced like the 'er' in 'paper'; that the letter 'o' in 'company' is not sounded like the 'o' in 'cot' but has to be said like the 'u' in 'but', and so on. To add to the pupil's confusion, some English words contain letters that are not pronounced at all: e.g., 'b' is silent in 'dumb' and 'doubt', 'c' in 'muscle' and 'victuals', 'ch' in 'schism' and 'yacht', and there are many other words that contain silent letters. Naturally, the pupil is greatly puzzled by the uncertain relation between letters and sounds in English, since in Sinhalese and Tamil, where letters usually represent definite sounds and where the quantity of vowel sounds is clearly marked, spelling helps pronunciation and *vice versa*.

The third difficulty arises in connection with the correct placing of the accent when the pupil is pronouncing English words of more than one syllable. The tendency to stress

the wrong syllable of such words is very common, as is shown by the regular mispronunciation of words like *monarch*, *energy*, *interval*, *industry*, which Sinhalese or Tamil pupils are inclined to say with an accent on the second syllable, instead of putting it correctly on the first. Such faulty stressing may be explained on the ground that the tendency in Sinhalese is to give prominence to those syllables which appear to contain long vowels. This seems the reason why a word like 'damage', for example, is incorrectly pronounced with the stress on the second syllable, as if this syllable rhymed with 'rage', instead of with the accent on the first syllable, the second being sounded as if it rhymed with the word 'ridge'.

Another difficulty is that of deciding which words in a sentence are to be stressed according to their particular importance. Ceylonese either make the mistake of giving the same stress to both important and unimportant words, or else of saying such words as *was*, *at*, *and*, *some*, *can*, *for*, even when they occur in unstressed positions, just as if these words required emphasis. English speakers habitually use reduced forms of these words in conversation, passing quickly over them, and thus obtain a speech rhythm which is characteristic of English as spoken by Englishmen. But our pupils, who use the strong forms of these words almost exclusively in conversation or when reading aloud, produce a staccato effect which makes their speech sound unnatural to English listeners.

The last and greatest difficulty which spoken English presents to the pupil is that of acquiring the intonations of English speech. Faulty local intonations arise from two causes:

(a) the pupil continues to use the intonation of his own language, if that happens to be Sinhalese or Tamil, when speaking English, and this gives his spoken English a 'chanting' effect; or

(b) he introduces local mannerisms to which he has listened so long that he has unconsciously acquired them. To overcome these tendencies the pupil has to cultivate deliberate listening to and imitation of the intonation of English speakers, as illustrated in good gramophone records of conversational English, and to practise using English intonation patterns when asking questions and making statements.



## CHAPTER I I

### LEARNING THE ENGLISH SPEECH SOUNDS

It is not enough for the Sinhalese or Tamil child to know the letters of the English alphabet. He has to be taught the English speech sounds systematically, and to be given adequate practice in these, if the foundations of a good pronunciation of English are to be built. Here is a list of these sounds with Key Words containing them, for practice:

#### *The English Vowels*

No.		Key Words		
1.	the vowel sound in	be	sea	seize
2.	„ „ „ „	it	city	build
3.	„ „ „ „	end	bread	said
4.	„ „ „ „	man	had	sat
5.	„ „ „ „	calf	laugh	calm
6.	„ „ „ „	not	hop	doll
7.	„ „ „ „	all	salt	talk
8.	„ „ „ „	good	full	wolf
9.	„ „ „ „	fool	shoe	group
10.	„ „ „ „	fun	come	son
11.	„ „ „ „	cur	word	heard
12.	the neutral vowel, heard in the first syllable of about, above, along.			

#### *The English Diphthongs*

A diphthong has been defined as a 'vowel-glide', in which the speech organs start in the position of one vowel and move in the direction of another. Thus in the word 'boy', for instance, if we leave out the consonant 'b', we find that there is a glide from the sound of 'o' in 'not' to the sound of 'i' in 'pin'. Of the nine English diphthongs only two are probably found in Sinhalese and Tamil.



No.		Key Words
1.	the middle sound in	gate    pail    maid
2.	„ „ „ „	boat    gold    hope
3.	„ „ „ „	bite    child    find
4.	„ „ „ „	house    plough    now
5.	„ „ „ „	noise    join    boy
6.	„ „ „ „	dear    here    fear
7.	„ „ „ „	mare    their    hair
8.	„ „ „ „	four    oar    floor
9.	„ „ „ „	tour    poor    sure

A very good exercise for comparing the sounds of the English vowels is to arrange them in groups as follows:

Nos. 1 and 2.	bead	bid.	Nos. 6, 7, 8.
„ 2 „ 3.	lift	left.	cot caught could.
„ 3 „ 4.	met	mat.	Nos. 4, 5, 10.
„ 4 „ 5.	hat	heart.	match march much.
„ 5 „ 6.	cart	cot.	
„ 6 „ 7.	swan	sworn.	
„ 8 „ 9.	full	fool.	
„ 10 „ 11.	shut	shirt.	

### *Diphthongs for comparison*

Nos. 1, 3, 4.	mate	mite	mound.
„ 2, 3, 9.	mode	mild	moor.
„ 6, 7, 9.	mere	mare	moor.

### *The English Consonants*

p.	pencil	paper	pump.
b.	back	barber	bribe.
t.	tart	totter	toast.
d.	debt	dreaded	dead.
k.	cake	cook	kick.
g.	guess	tiger	gun.

The sound of 'ch' in	chain	chair	chop.
„ „ „ 'j' „	jam	jack	joy.
„ „ „ 'm' „	make	mimic	mope.
„ „ „ 'n' „	noon	nice	nod.

The sound of 'ng' in	song	hang	cling.
" " " 'l' "	lamb	love	leaf.
" " " 'f' "	fond	food	safe.
" " " 'v' "	vain	give	prove.
" " " 'th' "	thank	three	thirty.
The other sound of 'th' "	this	them	these.
The " " 's' "	sat	Sam	sand.
" " " 'z' "	zebra	zone	zero.
" " " 'sh' "	sure	sugar	ship.
" " " 'zh' "	pleasure	treasure	measure.
" " " 'r' "	rat	red	rice.
" " " 'h' "	high	hole	hunt.

In addition to these 22 consonants there exist in English two semi-vowels, represented by the letters 'w' and 'y'. These sounds are called 'semi-vowels' because they are partly consonants and partly vowels.

Examples of *w*: will, wind, wand.

Examples of *y*: yet, you, yard.

As the teacher's main work will be the teaching of the English speech sounds that are not found in Sinhalese and Tamil, much importance must be attached to the systematic teaching and practice of the new sounds. The teacher must be able to understand and analyse the difficulties of the pupil in producing the sounds that are peculiar to English. Mere imitation of the teacher is not enough. Nor is it desirable to give the nearest Sinhalese or Tamil equivalent of the English sound. This method is positively injurious. During the first few weeks much time will have to be spent on actual sound drill, during which the pupil will be given a training in intelligent listening to and accurate reproduction of the new sounds. The teacher must be prepared to deal with the different types of error that a pupil is likely to make in saying speech sounds not found in his own language. Here are some of these mistakes:

1. Substitution of sounds belonging to the mother tongue for the new sound he is asked to make: e.g., of 'p' for 'f', of a long pure vowel for a diphthong, of the Sinhalese 'o' for the vowel sound in 'not' (for which there is no equivalent in Sinhalese or Tamil).

2. Production of the desired sound in the wrong way: e.g., making the sounds of 'f' and 'v' with both lips instead of with the lower lip pressed against the upper teeth, or else with the lower lip placed so loosely against the upper teeth that the breath escapes without audible friction. (Fricative 'f' and 'v' are not found in Sinhalese and Tamil.)

3. Imperfect production of a sound: e.g., making the sound of the English 'w' without sufficient lip-rounding or raising the back of the tongue towards the soft palate.

Drill in the speech sounds should be systematic without being allowed to become dull and mechanical. Children soon come to appreciate their own skill and to delight in accuracy, provided pronunciation drill is conducted in the spirit of a game. Though it may be necessary to practise isolated sounds and work intensively at the production of these, it should always be remembered that the natural unit of speech is the sentence, and practice should end with the speaking of the new sounds contained in words that form a sentence.



## CHAPTER III

# SURMOUNTING THE DIFFICULTIES OF PRONUNCIATION

SPEECH, to be considered good, must possess four essentials: clear enunciation, precise articulation, rhythm and speech melody. Every teacher of pronunciation should therefore aim at helping pupils to speak distinctly, that is, to produce their consonants with precision. The distinct utterance of the consonants is what is meant chiefly by the word 'articulation'. His next aim should be to train pupils to give full value to their vowel sounds. This is where 'enunciation' comes in. His third aim should be teaching them to group their words properly, so as to make their phrasing rhythmic. His fourth aim should be showing them how to vary the pitch of their voices when speaking, so as to make their speech musical. This brings us to what is known as 'intonation'. Exercises calculated to attain these four aims should have a place in every speech training course.

Let us now consider the various exercises appropriate for the attainment of these aims, beginning with those conducive to good *articulation*. They are intended to ensure agility of the tongue and of the lips, and are very necessary as a corrective of faulty speech. Special work in connection with English sounds difficult for Ceylon children to produce correctly comes within the scope of articulation practice. This is specially important because English speech requires more vigorous articulation than Sinhalese, which, when compared with English, seems 'under-articulated'. All the English fricatives, and particularly 'f', 'v', the 'th' in 'thin' and 'then', the semi-vowel 'w', need special practice in order to ensure their correct production.

Pupils should be shown how the sound *f* is made by pressing the lower lip against the upper teeth and allowing the air to force its way between them and through the intervening spaces of the teeth. This applies also to the

production of the sound *v*. They should be warned against producing these two sounds in the ways they are apt to do, namely, with both lips or else with the lower lip lightly touching the centre front teeth. To ensure agility of the tongue pupils should be made to realize how neatly the tongue must be *pointed* in order to make a clear *t*, for example. To prevent Sinhalese pupils from producing *t* behind the teeth-ridge, as they do when saying the Sinhalese *t*, or Tamil pupils from producing it still further back, the teacher has to give his pupils a good deal of practice in saying English words which begin with *t*, e.g., *ton*, *totter*, *toast*, and in placing the tongue well *on* the teeth-ridge.

From the beginning it should be impressed on pupils that the way in which they use their lips when they speak makes a great difference to their pronunciation of the English 'w'. They should be made to raise the back of the tongue considerably in the direction of the soft palate and to round the lips closely. There is no real equivalent in Sinhalese for this sound, hence the inadequate production of it by Sinhalese pupils. The same applies to Tamil pupils.

With regard to the production of 'th' in 'thin' and in 'then', it should be noted that the Sinhalese equivalent of this sound is really a plosive, and that Sinhalese pupils have to be taught how to place the tip of the tongue between the teeth, and, taking care to keep the tongue in this position, to blow so that a stream of air passes out between the tip of the tongue and the upper teeth. The English 'z', not being found in either Sinhalese or Tamil, needs special practice. The tendency of the pupils is to substitute the 's' sound, which is found in their languages. Pupils should be told to put their fingers into their ears and note the difference between the two sounds—one is a buzzing sound (that of *z*), and the other a hissing sound (that of *s*).

So much for exercises in articulating the consonants. Now let us take the *enunciation* of the vowels. Indistinctness of vowel sounds is generally due to the mouth not being opened wide enough. Teachers should point out how the opening of the mouth widens as we go from the vowel sound of *eat* to that of *it*, and from these to that of *met*, and from *met* to *mat*, and from *mat* to *mart*. In order to give vowel sounds their full value the lower jaw should move as



much as possible without the speaker's appearing to make faces.

Another cause of indistinct vowel enunciation is the habit of not making the 'front' vowels—the sounds in *see*, *sit*, *set*, *sat*, and the diphthongs in words like *may* far enough forward in the mouth. For the back vowels—the sounds in *food*, *fool*, *for*, and *fop*,—the lips should be *well-rounded*. This is an essential element of these vowels and absolutely necessary for clear speaking. If attention is paid to these points, the speech of the pupils is likely to be much more clear and pleasing. If possible, small mirrors should be used by pupils when being trained to make new speech sounds, as their use adds to the interest of a speech-training lesson, and induces speedier and more expert mastery of the movements necessary for the production of sounds. The pupils are able to see for themselves how they use the speech organs when making a particular sound, and this helps them greatly in learning how to use these organs efficiently.

We now come to exercises intended to help pupils in acquiring the *rhythms of English speech*. Sentences in English, when spoken correctly, have a distinct rhythm, i.e., the words flow along in a manner determined by the beats of the accented syllables. For example, the following sentences are stressed in the manner indicated by the stress marks placed over the accented syllables:

- (a) Whenéver the cáttle came néar/to éat their háy,  
the dóg grówled/and bárked at them.
- (b) Once upon a tíme/there was a kíng/who  
fáiled to pléase his súbjects,/and was in gréat péril.
- (c) This is fíne wéather/for wáلكing./Wé had a  
lóvely tíme/on Sátturday.

You will notice that in each sense group the stresses fall almost regularly, with unstressed syllables between. This is the feature which characterises English speech rhythm and cannot be disregarded. You see, the pauses between the groups and the varying intonation of each group prevent monotony.

How is a teacher to make his pupils sensitive to this rhythmic quality of English when spoken? By beginning his lessons, not with prose sentences, but with selections of

verse that have a marked rhythmic quality. If these are practised thoroughly, it will be found that giving the successive accents their proper emphasis has the effect of creating a sense of rhythm in the pupils—making them, so to speak, “rhythm-minded”. Lines like these, said quickly and with zest—

“Sée our spléndid sprinters, spórtsmen áll so fine.”

“Dávid is a sóldier bóld—quite réady fór a fíght.”

or like these, said slowly and sadly,

“Tóll for the bráve—

The bráve that áre no móre:

All súnk benéath the wáve,

Fást by their nátive shóre.”

develop the sense of rhythm. Practice of this kind results in a firm articulation, and the practice of varied rhythms is one of the best exercises for improving delivery. It should end with an attempt to convey to the pupils the *significance* of rhythm in speech. Give sentences which need a change of time in saying the words to suit their meanings. You tell the children:

Speak these sentences quickly, stressing the important words:

“Cóme and lóok at thís!”

“Oh! Lóok! It's móving!”

“Up the áiry móuntain,

Dówn the rúshy glén!”

“The children were shóuting togéther.”

Now speak these sentences slowly, as if you are sad:

“Móther! I couldn't gét a síngle súm ríght!”

“The póor bóy lóoks véry íll. I'm só sórry for him.”

Practice of these rhythms develops control of speech, and also leads to fluency. Lessons on rhythm should always carry over what is learnt in them to the ordinary language lesson. Speaking passages of prose and verse with their appropriate rhythms helps to eliminate slovenly speech. It leads to a clear type of voice production and vigorous diction.



## CHAPTER IV

### TEACHING THE NEW SOUNDS

A TEACHER of English speech has not only to act as a model of pronunciation; he has also to show his pupils how the new sounds are made, and to give them specific instructions with regard to using their speech organs for this purpose. The learner cannot always be expected to acquire these sounds by 'simple imitation'. On the contrary he may have to be shown the kind of error he makes when he goes wrong before he can succeed in producing the right sound. The teacher must have a sufficiently trained ear to be able to recognize the wrong sound that the pupil may make, and also be able to produce this sound, so that he can demonstrate to the pupil the *contrast* between the wrong sound and the right.

The teaching of a new sound usually passes through more than one stage. In the first the teacher makes an appeal to the ear of the pupil. He pronounces a sound several times in succession and then calls upon the pupil to imitate his pronunciation of the sound. This attempt may be successful for the time, but there is always a likelihood of the pupil's substituting a sound of his own language for the English speech sound he should make. When this happens, the teacher resorts to the method of contrast: he first makes the sound the pupil has made, then the sound he should have made, and points out the difference between the two.

Sometimes the pupils have to produce English speech sounds which cause them special difficulty, because the speech organs have to be used in a particular way with which the pupils are quite unfamiliar. Here the steps are as follows:

STEP 1. The teacher tells the pupils to observe how he uses his speech organs when he makes the particular sound. He then says the sound several times, and asks the pupils to imitate him.

STEP 2. If they are not successful, he shows them exactly how he uses his speech organs when making the desired sound, and gets them to use their speech organs in the same way. For example, if he wishes them to make the sound 'f', he shows that this sound is produced by pressing the lower lip against the upper teeth, and allowing the air to force its way between them, and through the openings of the teeth. The English 'v' is formed in the same way, except that the vocal cords are made to vibrate, so that 'voice' is produced during the articulation of the sound.

STEP 3. When the pupils have been shown how to make the desired sound by adjusting their speech organs as needed, they are given a great deal of practice in making the sound by itself, in combination with another sound, and in words containing this sound.

STEP 4. Whenever a pupil happens to pronounce the new sound incorrectly, he is called upon to notice the contrast between his wrong pronunciation and the right one, the teacher demonstrating how each is made, and driving home the difference between them.

STEP 5. If the sound is not represented in the English alphabet by one particular letter, it is associated with its particular *phonetic* symbol. This helps to fix the sound and make it definite.

## CHAPTER V

# THE TEACHING OF STRESS IN ENGLISH

STRESS is the degree of force with which a sound or a syllable or a word is uttered. It is a characteristic feature of English speech, and serves a definite purpose. Since it is a good deal more complicated than is commonly supposed, some remarks on its presentation in the classroom may be of assistance to teachers. The first essential is to keep a clear distinction between word-stress and sentence-stress. By the former is meant the prominence given in pronunciation to one syllable in a word over the adjacent syllables, and by the latter the emphasis placed on the most important words in a sentence. Such words are usually the nouns, adjectives, demonstrative and interrogative pronouns, principal verbs, and adverbs. Word-stress should, of course, be taught as each new word is presented to a pupil; he will not make mistakes if he hears the word pronounced correctly the first time he meets with it. From the outset the correct placing of the stress must be impressed on the pupil. The stressed syllable must be said with the utmost distinctness by the teacher, and be repeated in the same manner by the pupil. The teacher should make a point of saying the simplest sentences so as to bring out the stressed syllables and the appropriate speech rhythm.

*Sentence-stress.* The modifications which take place in the stressing of words when they are strung together in spoken sentences need careful attention. When one word qualifies another, both the words are usually stressed. Examples: it's *very useful*, a *thrilling tale*, the *first prize*. When we turn to the complete suppression of the stress on the less important words of a sentence, we are faced by one of the major problems in teaching the pronunciation of English, how to get our pupils to use the correct rhythm. This brings us to the use of Strong and Weak forms. Many common English words have more than one pronunciation



according to the position they occupy in a sentence. Weak forms are used only in unstressed positions; and strong forms chiefly when the word is stressed. On first meeting each of about 50 words which have weak forms, such as *of, at, for, and, can, was*, etc., we should be careful to teach at least one of its weak forms, and contrast it with the strong form, putting each into an appropriate context. The early teaching of weak forms has the further advantage of showing the student how the sentence-stress falls on the important words and skips over the unimportant ones, and of training him to be on the look-out for words which will not be stressed in the sentence. This is the foundation of the acquisition of good English speech rhythm and the surest way of curing that disconcerting staccato delivery with which so many Sinhalese and Tamil pupils speak English.

Pupils have to be taught to group words properly, and, when they read aloud, to emphasize the words that require stressing. To do this, short passages should be selected in which the words are grouped together in definite sections, and these should be read aloud by the teacher who will indicate the grouping by slight pauses at each group or by changes of intonation. The passage can then be put on the black-board, the sense groups marked off by vertical lines, with the help of the pupils, who will be called upon to select the groups while the teacher reads the passage a second time from the board. The pupils should also be asked to name the words stressed by the teacher. They will then be given practice in reading the passage aloud, in making pauses at each sense group long enough to make the division into groups quite clear, and in stressing the words that need to be stressed.

#### AN EXERCISE IN THE STRESSING OF WORDS

Cónduct (Noun)	Cómpany	Devélop
Condúct (Verb)	Ópposite	Thermómeter
Récord (Noun)	Phótograph	Potáto
Recórd (Verb)	Cháacter	Occásion
Fréquent (Adj.)	Sécretary	Percéntage
Frequént (Verb)	Árgumen	Advértisement
Désert (Noun)	Énergy	Succéssful
Desért (Verb)	Ínterval	Commíttee

Présent (Noun)	Anecdote	Beginning
Présent (Verb)	Mischievous	Proféssor
Réfuse (Noun)	Prévalent	Courágeous
Refúse (Verb)	Mércantile	Umbrélla
Ábsent (Adj.)	Réctangle	Partícular
Absént (Verb)	Síngular	Mosquito
Pródúce (Noun)	Súbstitute	Pathétic
Prodúce (Verb)	Tímórous	Redúction

AN EXERCISE IN READING SENTENCES WITH THE  
CORRECT SENTENCE-STRESS

The words to be stressed are in *italics* :

1. *This* is a *táble*.
2. *Thát* is a *cháir*.
3. *This* is a *néw bóok*.
4. *Whére* is my *ríght hánd*?
5. It's *ón* the *désk*.
6. *Whóse* *book* have you *táken* from the *shélf*?
7. *Whére* *díd* you *pút* the *pícture yésterday*?
8. *Hów* *lóng* does the *traín stóp* at *Kándy*?
9. *Whích* *bús* ought I to *táke*?
10. *Whére* does it *stóp*?
11. *Fínd páge* *twénty-nine*.
12. *Réad* the *fírst páragraph*.
13. *Whát's* the *méaning* of *thát word*?
14. *Hów* do you *pronóunce* it?
15. *Whén* do you *gét* your *hólidays*?

## CHAPTER VI

# THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH INTONATION

THE rise and fall of the pitch of the voice when we speak is called Intonation. It is this we now have to consider. Intonation as an element of English speech has often been neglected in the teaching of spoken English in Ceylon.

Let us take some examples of the ways in which intonation enters into the speaking of short sentences:

Tom bought a book.

\* Read the first sentence.

Which bus ought I to take?

We start on a high pitch with the first word in each sentence, and drop gradually till with the last word in the sentence the pitch of the voice reaches a low level. This simple tune is very commonly used in English speech in making definite statements, in giving commands, and in asking questions which begin with an interrogative adjective, adverb, or pronoun. Let us take another set of sentences:

It seems rather strange.

Are you quite sure?

Come and see me soon.

The first is a statement leaving the way open for either the speaker or the hearer to say something more. The second is a question to which the answer may be 'yes' or 'no', and it begins with a verb. The third is a polite request. In saying each of these sentences a slight *rise* would occur when we reach the last word. This rise is essential to the musical pattern of the tune used by the speaker. So we see that English intonation consists of two main tunes, with many possibilities of variation.



The teaching of Intonation may be carried out as follows :

STEP 1. Pupils listen to the speaking of conversational sentences reproduced in good gramophone records.

STEP 2. Pupils say the sentences together with the speakers of the recorded sentences.

STEP 3. Pupils say the sentences individually.

The teacher listens, criticizes, and demonstrates the tune of each sentence.

STEP 4. Pupils practise saying other sentences of a similar type. Teacher demonstrates how these sentences should be spoken with the appropriate tunes. Pupils are called upon to imitate the teacher.

STEP 5. A graphic representation on the blackboard, consisting of a horizontal line above a word in a sentence which starts on a high pitch, and a falling arrow before a word denoting a fall of pitch, or an arrow pointing upwards before a word denoting a rise in pitch.

## CHAPTER VII

### LESSONS IN SPEECH TRAINING

HERE are some exercises which can be made the basis of daily speech work. It will be well if a minimum of not less than thirty minutes a week can be set aside for definite speech training. This is intended to give pupils mastery of the essentials of good speech, and is not quite the same thing as the speech practice which forms part of an ordinary language lesson. It denotes Speech Drill, and the exercises introduced into it fulfil the same purpose as those used in Physical Drill, namely, the conscious repeated performance of movements with a view to making that performance automatic and effortless. As the term implies, speech training is a preparation for speaking with fluency and expressiveness whenever the occasion for doing so arises, either in the classroom or outside it.

#### A TYPICAL LESSON UNIT

##### Exercise I. *Breath-Control*

(5 Minutes)

Get the pupils to sit well up in their seats and take a good breath. Then make them say this series with you at the rate of a number a second: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc. Stop them when they begin to show signs of straining. Never go beyond 10 numbers.

##### Exercise II. *Mastery of Rhythm*

(10 Minutes)

Here is an excellent piece of verse for this purpose, with its unmistakable rhythm, ta tum, ta ta tum, ta tum, and so on.

For wánt of a náil, the shóe was lóst,  
For wánt of a shóe, the hórse was lóst,  
For wánt of a hórse, the ríder was lóst,  
For wánt of a ríder, the báttle was lóst,  
For wánt of a báttle, the kíngdom was lóst.



The teacher will first read the poem aloud to the class, stressing the syllables marked with a stress sign, and then place it on the blackboard before the pupils, who will now be asked to follow it carefully while the teacher reads it aloud a second time, having first instructed the class to note on which words in each line he puts stress as he reads. He then asks them which word in each line he has stressed, and places a mark over them. Pupils now say the lines with the teacher, who sees that they all start together, and that they keep time. Groups of pupils now say the lines by themselves, the teacher giving only such help as is necessary. Finally, individual pupils are called upon to say the lines, the others offering comments on the merits of each performance.

Exercise III. *Analysis and Mastery of a Difficult Speech Sound*  
(10 Minutes)

The 'w' sound (as found in *what, wool, wish*). Ask the pupils, after they hear you say these words two or three times, to split up each of these into the three sounds of which it is composed. Then ascertain from them the first sound of each and call this the 'wer' sound. Demonstrate how it should be said, with the lips well rounded, and stating that the back of the tongue has to be raised. Contrast it with the Sinhalese 'w', which is said with the lips spread. Now get them to note what they do when they say the long 'oo' sound in 'root'. The lips are rounded. Ask them what happens to the back of the tongue. They will tell you that it is raised. Now get them to practise the word 'well' first as oo: ell beginning with the lips well rounded. Shorten the 'oo' sound until a distinct 'w' is heard. Now drill them in the pronunciation of 'what', 'wool', 'wish'.

Exercise IV. *Mastery of Intonation*  
(15 Minutes)

Say the following sentences, making sure that you start high with the first word and let the pitch drop with the last word to a low level. Don't forget that the stressed

words must be emphasized, and that the correct rhythm must be preserved.

- (a) Whén  
will he —  
cóme? —
- (b) Whát  
did you —  
dó? —
- (c) Whére  
did he —  
go? —
- (d) Whát  
do you —  
wánt? —
- (e) Hów  
did he —  
cóme? —
- (f) Whý  
has he —  
léft? —

### FURTHER PRACTICE IN INTONATION

#### (A Dialogue)

- A. — Háve  
you been stáying here lóng? —
- B. — Nó. I cáme  
here yéster day. —
- A. — I bég  
don? —  
your pár —
- B. — I sáid  
that I cáme here yéster day. —
- A. — Háve  
— you béen to the zoo? —

- B. — Nót —  
 — as yét. I dón't wánt to —  
 — gó. —
- A. — Áre —  
 — síre? —  
 — you quíte —
- B. — Of cóurse. I've béen there be fóre. —

## ANOTHER LESSON UNIT

Exercise I. *Grouping Words properly*

(10 Minutes)

Let the children consider this sentence: 'On our way home we saw five rabbits near a large wood.' Ask them whether they would read this sentence aloud word by word thus: On-our-way-home etc., or taking three or four words at a time, thus: On our way home—we saw five rabbits—near a large wood.

They will agree that the sentence should be read in three groups. How shall we keep the groups separate? We do this by making a very short pause between each group and the next. This helps to make the sentence clear. Now give them practice in reading this sentence aloud, first dividing it into groups on the board by means of vertical lines, and then making them read it with slight pauses at the end of each group:

'Éarly in the mórning/befóre the sún had risen/the dóor was ópened.'

Exercise II. *Mastery of Speech Rhythm*

- (1) ta túm túm ta ta túm ta.  
I dón't thínk he can dó it.
- (2) ta túm ta túm ta ta túm ta túm.  
I heárd him pláy at the públic háll.
- (3) túm ta túm ta ta túm ta ta.  
Rún and fétch me a hámmer, Tom.
- (4) Lét me shów you hów to dó it.
- (5) Dóes this tráín stóp at Colómbo?



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Exercise III. *English Stress*

(5 Minutes)

A useful rule for the correct stressing of words ending in '-ic', '-tion', such as 'energetic', 'attention', should be noted: In these words the stress falls on the syllable immediately preceding the last one:

Examples are:

(a) Dramatic  
Pathetic  
Scientific  
Terrific  
Pacific

(b) Direction  
Connexion  
Admiration  
Adoption  
Conjunction

Exceptions:

Arabic,  
Catholic,  
Choleric,  
Lunatic.

With regard to these Lesson Units it has to be mentioned that they should be taken so that the pupils are helped in two ways: *Demonstration* by the teacher, the pupil observing and imitating. *Explanation*, when difficulties occur, which takes the form of both statement and graphic representation. Speech-training exercises must be carried out in the spirit of a game. The teacher, while fully aware of his aim and very precise in his methods of achieving it, will studiously avoid any suggestions of coercion. If he succeeds in bringing home to his pupils that speech training is enjoyable as well as useful, and not a rather laborious business, he will find his pupils eager to co-operate with him. To achieve good results they must put in their utmost efforts when going through the speech exercises, and this will only be done if the pupils look forward to their speech game and lend their willing co-operation.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SOME ESSENTIALS

(a) *Good Models.* The teacher's own speech is the chief model. He should be constantly asking himself: "Do I demonstrate in my own speech what I insist on my pupils putting into practice?"

(b) *Ear-Training.* It is a necessary preliminary to actual speech. The aim of this is two-fold: (1) to induce critical listening; (2) to train the ear to distinguish the characteristics of the English speech sounds. A good exercise for this purpose is as follows: A pattern sound is chosen, and children are asked to listen to it and imitate it. Then a number of words, *with* and *without* this sound, are presented in haphazard order, and the children are asked to identify it by holding up their hands when they hear it.

Young pupils are quite likely to confuse sounds at first, and distinguishing them in this way is good practice for them.

A question which arises when work of this kind is suggested is: how much time should be devoted to it? No specific answer can be given to this question, but it will be good if two periods a week, of not less than fifteen consecutive minutes for each, can be included in the class time-table.

(c) *Rousing Interest.* The only way to induce children to work with keenness is to provide practice material which, while it really aims at dealing with the children's difficulties, is amusing enough to make them work with enjoyment. Humour, rhythm, and melody are the ingredients of good practice material.

(d) *Efficiency.* This should involve the acceptance of a definite standard of performance that the pupil will do his best to observe. That which has been acquired at the specific speech lessons should be *maintained* by the pupils whenever they speak English in the classroom. The attainment of a satisfactory standard must of necessity be gradual, but definite results should crown the teacher's effort if the essentials laid down in this chapter are thoroughly satisfied.

Finally, in teaching the pronunciation of English, it is necessary to use the pupils' mother tongue in introducing lessons, and in specific lessons or parts of lessons involving instruction in the production of difficult sounds, the correct stressing of syllables or words, and the use of the correct intonation.



# LIST OF GRAMOPHONE RECORDS AND BOOKS

## PRONUNCIATION RECORDS

*Essential English Gramophone Records.* Set of six 12-inch double-sided Records (Longmans)

*Gramophone Records* issued by Linguaphone Language Institute, London, Columbia Company and H.M.V.

## BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

Jones, Daniel: *An Outline of English Phonetics* (Heffer)

„ *The Pronunciation of English* (C.U.P.)

„ *Pronouncing Dictionary of English* (Dent)

Ward, Ida: *The Phonetics of English* (Heffer)

„ *Defects of Speech* (Dent)

Bennett, Rodney: *Practical Speech Training for Schools* (U.L.P.)

McAllister, Anna: *The Primary Teacher's Guide to Speech Training* (U.L.P.)

*Steps to Speech Training* (U.L.P.)

Hopps, Marie: *Speech Training Exercises* (U.L.P.)

Harman, H. A.: *English Pronunciation Exercises* (Longmans)

„ *The Sounds of English Speech* (Longmans)

James, A. Lloyd: *Our Spoken Language* (Nelson)

Palmer, H. E.: *Teaching of Oral English* (Longmans)

Watson, Alexander: *Speak Out* (Harrap)

*English Language Teaching* (Longmans for the British Council)

In nearly every issue, an article is devoted to Pronunciation.



